

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan (FL-13) voted today to prevent increased Medicare costs that would result in smaller Social Security checks for an estimated 300,000 low income senior citizens in Florida. The Congressman helped pass The Medicare Fairness Premium Act (H.R. 3631) to prevent a sharp increase in Medicare Part B premiums, which are typically deducted from a senior citizen's Social Security check to help pay for physician services and outpatient care.

"Low income seniors living on a fixed income are already struggling to make ends meet," said Buchanan. "They can't afford to have their monthly Social Security checks reduced to pay for an increase in Medicare."

Under current law, low income and newly enrolled seniors would see their monthly premium rise from \$96.40 to as much as \$120.00 next year with no offsetting cost of living increase in Social Security benefits. Other Medicare beneficiaries are held harmless from having to pay the Part B premium increase if there is no increase in their Social Security benefits.

"This bill would correct this inequity and ensure that every Medicare beneficiary is protected from increased health care costs without adding to the deficit," added Buchanan.

The bill would freeze Medicare Part B premiums for fiscal year 2010 and deduct the \$2.8 billion cost from the Medicare Improvement Fund.

The Social Security Administration projects no cost-of-living allowances (COLAS) next year. COLAS are dependent the Consumer Price Index(CPI), which saw negative inflation last year, during the worst recession since the Great Depression.